

20 May 1966

California Farmer
Room 402--2412 W. 7th St.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90057

Dear Miss McAlinden:

Since I am leaving tomorrow morning for Washington, D. C. for a week, I had better get off this answer to you at once. Glad to hear that the Mother Lode country came through for you with lots of flowers.

This is a mixed bag you sent me this time. Lots of leaves but I'll do the best I can with them.

No. 1 is the western spice-bush or sweet-shrub, Calycanthus occidentalis H. & A., so named because of the very sweet odor of the leaves. It is one of our most fascinating shrubs and a member of a very primitive family. It likes moist places below 4000 ft. but does rather well here at the Rancho, forming a beautiful green rounded shrub. The purple-red flowers are attractive but inconspicuous usually in the shrub. They are pollinated by small beetles. It is native only in California in the north Coast Ranges from Napa to Trinity County and along the western base of the Sierra from Tulare to Shasta Co.

No. 2 - Must be Acer saccharinum L., the silver or soft maple. The leaf is somewhat unlike the leaf from a mature tree but that could be expected from a seedling. Usually there is heavy growth of seedlings under fruiting maple trees. They can be quite a nuisance in the garden or lawn.

No. 3 - Appears to be Psoralea orbicularis Lindl. of the legume family, Fabaceae. It grows in moist places below 5000 feet in many of the plant communities of cis-montane California. The corolla is usually reddish purple.

No. 4 - Seems to be the terminal leaflets of a leaf of the pecan tree, Carya illinoensis (Wang.) K. Koch, a member of the hickory genus and walnut family. I don't know much about the culture of pecan. Has the tree flowered yet? It may be still too young to bear fruit. If it has flowered and not borne fruit, it may be self-sterile. I think I have heard it said that one needs to plant two trees of pecan to obtain fruit. I can not vouch for the veracity of this statement. It is supposed to be true of the chestnut.

No. 5 - looks to me like the topmost leaves of Perilla frutescens (L.) Britt., which is introduced from eastern Asia. It is sometimes a garden-escape and is a weed in waste places and bottomlands in the East. I know of no common name for it and am unacquainted with the name "Persian Silk." Is the stem square and the foliage fragrant when crushed? If so, it is a mint, Lamiaceae, whether of the above species or not. I need flowers for a sure determination of this one. If it is Perilla, it can grow to about 3 feet high and because of its weedy tendencies, there should be no problem to growing it.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Thorne
Taxonomist